NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0787 MAY 14, 1976
MARK WILLEN/MICHIGAN

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK - CARTER ON THE ROAD

ANNCR:

FRONT RUNNING DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER JIMMY CARTER IS CAMPAIGNING THIS WEEK FOR UPCOMING PRIMARY CONTESTS IN MARYLAND AND MICHIGAN. V-O-A'S MARK WILLEN, TRAVELLING WITH THE CARTER CAMPAIGN, HAS THESE OBSERVATIONS.

VOICE:

THIS REPORTER HAS NOT TRAVELLED WITH THE CARTER CAMPAIGN SINCE THE NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY LAST FEBRUARY. THAT WAS THE FIRST OF THE NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX PRIMARIES, AND JIMMY CARTER WAS JUST ONE OF ABOUT TEN DEMOCRATS SEEKING THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION. NOW, IT IS SIXTEEN PRIMARIES LATER. JIMMY CARTER HAS WON ELEVEN OF THOSE. HE HAS COLLECTED ABOUT HALF THE DELEGATES NEEDED FOR NOMINATION AT THE JULY DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION, AND HE IS THE ACKNOWLEDGED FRONT RUNNER.

MUCH HAS HAPPENED TO THE CARTER CAMPAIGN SINCE FEBRUARY, AND THE CHANGES ARE VERY MUCH APPARENT. WHEN JIMMY CARTER FIRST CAMPAIGNED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE, HE TRAVELLED WITH A HANDFUL OF STAFF MEMBERS AND REPORTERS. HE WOULD GREET PEOPLE WITH "HI, I'M JIMMY CARTER, AND I'M RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT." FOR MANY PROSPECTIVE VOTERS, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THEY HAD HEARD HIS NAME. NONE OF THAT IS TRUE TODAY.

WHEN JIMMY CARTER TRAVELS, IT IS WITH THE FULL CREW OF ADVISORS, AND BETWEEN FIFTY AND ONE HUNDRED REPORTERS. POLICE CARS WITH WAILING SIRENS LEAD THE WAY, AND PEOPLE

LINE THE STREETS WAITING FOR A CHANCE TO SEE THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, OR PERHAPS, TO SHAKE HIS HAND. HE DOES NOT HAVE TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF ANYMORE; HE'S ALWAYS INTRODUCED BY A CAMPAIGN SPOKESMAN AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES. THERE IS A CLEAR CHANGE IN THE ATTITUDE OF ALL THE PEOPLE WHO SURROUND THE CANDIDATE. STAFF, NEWSMEN AND VOTERS ALL SUDDENLY SEEM TO REGARD HIM AS THE MOST SERIOUS CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT.

WHAT IS MOST NOTICEABLE HOWEVER, IS NOT THE CHANGE THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE BUT THE CHANGE THAT HAS NOT TAKEN PLACE. THE MOST STRIKING THING ABOUT A CARTER CAMPAIGN SPEECH TODAY IS THAT IT IS THE SAME AS THE BASIC CAMPAIGN SPEECH HE USED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE. HE STILL CRITICIZES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AS BEING UNORGANIZED AND INEFFICIENT; HE PROMISES MAJOR RE-ORGANIZATION; HE CRITICIZES THE GOVERNMENT FOR GETTING AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE; HE ARGUES THAT IT IS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND NOT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WATERGATE, FOR EXCESS SECRECY, AND FOR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES BY INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES. HE STILL PROFESSES A BASIC FAITH IN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. "YOU DESERVE A GOVERNMENT AS GOOD AS YOU ARE," HE SAYS, AND HE PROMISES AN OPEN AND HONEST ADMINISTRATION: "I'LL NEVER TELL YOU A LIE," HE PLEDGES IN ALMOST EVERY CAMPAIGN STOP.

THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY THE CARTER APPROACH HAS NOT CHANGED. ONE IS OBVIOUS -- IT HAS WORKED -- NO NEED TO TEMPER WITH SUCCESS. BUT THERE IS A SECOND LESS OBVIOUS REASON. MANY PEOPLE MAY BE SURPRISED BY THE SUCCESS OF JIMMY CARTER, BUT HE IS NOT ONE OF THEM. TODAY, JIMMY CARTER PREDICTS HE WILL BECOME PRESIDENT. A FULL YEAR AGO HE WAS MAKING THE SAME

PREDICTION. JIMMY CARTER HAS A TREMENDOUS DRIVE AND A TREMENDOUS DETERMINATION. FOR TWO YEARS, HE HAS WORKED FULL TIME FOR THE PRESIDENCY, AND HE HAS ALWAYS BELIEVED HE WOULD GET IT. IT IS CLEAR FROM WATCHING JIMMY CARTER CAMPAIGN TODAY THAT HE IS STILL CONVINCED HE WILL REACH THAT GOAL.

EC/PY